

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner in Cincinnati, Ohio July 23, 1999

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, first, let me say that I think in the spirit of candor, I should tell you that the real reason that the air-conditioning is not on tonight is that it's part of my continuing effort to convince the American people that Al Gore is right about global warming. [Laughter] And I hope you will join us now in this crusade.

When Stan gave me this purple shirt, I thought instead of saying, "no one more regal," I thought he was going to say, "I'm going to give him this purple shirt, because no one is more wounded than him." [Laughter]

Joe Andrew, every time he says that line about we're going to win everything from President to dog catcher, as if that's a wide gulf, I said, plenty of times in the last few years, I thought that was a very short distance, those two positions. [Laughter]

I'd like to begin, if I might, by saying a few thank-you's. I want to thank Stan and his whole family, and I want to thank Dick and his wonderful family. And to Jim, I want to thank you and all the people that are associated with you and have been there for me and for my party for all these years. I'm grateful to the people of Ohio who have voted for me and for Al Gore twice, under what would normally seem to be adverse political conditions, when the Republicans were doing pretty well here statewide, and conventional wisdom would have it that we wouldn't do so well.

I want to thank Joe Andrew for agreeing to leave the security of his home in Indiana and take on the challenge of the Democratic Party. And David Leland, who in '96, had what I thought was the cleverest idea. He had a \$96 fundraiser for the Democrats, and as I remember, he had 4,000 people there, which was a pretty impressive turnout, and I knew we were going to carry Ohio again.

I want to thank Jody Richards, my longtime friend, who was the Speaker of the House in Kentucky. We were working on education together back when I was a young Governor with no gray hair and no reasonable prospects of this happy occasion. And I want to say a special word of thanks to Tony Hall, who is not only one of the finest Congressmen but one of the

finest human beings I have ever known in my life, and Ohio can be very, very proud of him. And I thank you, sir, for all you've done and all you have been and the way you have been there for me as a friend as well as an ally.

And I want to thank my friend Bill Daley for serving in the Cabinet, being a brilliant Secretary of Commerce, a great political leader, and I think that even though I have to retire in a year and a half, you haven't heard the last of him.

As you know, this has been a highly emotional week for me and for Hillary and for Chelsea. We are friends of Senator Kennedy and his family. We knew and had the greatest respect for John Kennedy. I had a wonderful, long evening with John and Carolyn. We thought the world of Jackie Kennedy. And we're Americans, so we went through this last week experiencing it both in a personal way and experiencing it just in the same way every other citizen did. So I'm not going to give you a whoop-dee-doo tonight; I'm going to ask you to think about why you're here and what you will say tomorrow if someone asks you why you came.

When Senator Kennedy—and I was just told at the table tonight that the eulogy for his nephew is now available on the Internet. It may be printed in full in your paper tomorrow. Somehow, you ought to get the whole thing and read it.

The last sentence in the eulogy was this: "Like his father, he had every gift but length of life." I say that not to be morbid or even sad, because it was actually quite a wonderful service, but to remind us all that life is fleeting and fragile; things we don't deserve happen to us, both good things and bad things, and our only obligation can be to get up every day and try to be children of God and do the best we can with the life we have.

I believe that the work that we have been engaged in, the political work of the country, is good work. I believe most people who do it in both parties are good people and personally compassionate, by the way. I believe that. I despair that so much of the politics of the last few years has been about, you know, personal attacks, because it diverts the attention of the

public from the life we share in common and the obligations we have to each other and to our children and to our country.

And today I left that church, that beautiful old church, thinking that all of us, including me, ought to do more every day to remember that life is fleeting and fragile, but a great gift; with all of its troubles and tears, it's a great gift.

And so when I think about what I'd like to say to you, it is this, that in 1992 when I ran for President—and early on in the race I saw John Kennedy, Jr., and his mother at events for me when I didn't know them, really, and I was running fifth in the New Hampshire primary—I did it because I felt the country needed to change direction. And I offered some ideas to the American people based on the premise that we ought to be trying to create a country in the new century where every responsible citizen has the opportunity to live out his or her dreams, and where we're coming closer together as an American community even as we grow more diverse in our racial and ethnic and religious characteristics, and where we do more to be the world's leading force for peace and freedom and prosperity. Now, I am very grateful that those ideas, when put into action, turned out to have pretty good results.

You know what has happened in the economy. We also have a 30-year low in welfare and a 26-year low in the crime rate. A lot of our social problems, our evading teen pregnancy and drug use, are down. Our test scores are beginning to rise after years and years and years in our schools; last year in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grade they were all up in both reading and math for the first time in a long time. Ninety percent of our children immunized against childhood diseases for the first time in the history of our country. The air and the water is cleaner; the food is safer. We've set aside more land from the Florida Everglades to the California redwoods than any administration except those of Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. And I am very, very grateful to have had the chance to serve.

I would like to say, because now that we're in a political season, many of those who spent the last 6½ years telling the American people I had no business being President now say, "Oh, well, Clinton's like Michael Jordan; he just jumps higher than the other Democrats now.

The natural order of things will reassert itself, and we Republicans will rule America again."

I want you to understand that I'm glad I had the chance to serve. But I could give the best speech in the world, and if the ideas were wrong or if there were no implementation, we would not have been able to turn the country around. And I want you to understand that very little of what I did could have been done if I hadn't had the Vice President I did, who knew a lot more than I did when we started about a lot of the things we had to work on; if I hadn't had people like Bill Daley and his great predecessor, Ron Brown, and a lot of other people helping us; if I hadn't had allies like Tony Hall in the Congress. And I say that to make this point: Tomorrow when they ask you why you were here, I hope you will say, "Because I like the ideas they had, and they worked for America. And I'm not just supporting Bill Clinton; I'm supporting what we all believe." And we have the proof now. We no longer have to debate these things; we now have evidence.

The second thing that I'd like you to think about is, we now are in a great hazardous period. We human beings are all inherently weak in some way or another, and sometimes the worst thing in the world for us is the illusion that everything is perfect and can't go bad. And so we have all this prosperity now, and I would argue that's a hazardous time, because prosperity and security can lead people to arrogance and shortsightedness if they're not careful. I used to carry around with me when I was a Governor 10 little written rules of politics, and one of them was, "You're always most vulnerable when you think you're invulnerable."

And so I say to you, we have this huge surplus. We had a \$290 billion deficit when I took office. We've got almost a \$100 billion surplus this year. We have projected surpluses for a long time to come. The big question now is, what are we going to do with our prosperity? We've got the country working again; now what are we going to do? And there's this big debate going on in Washington. The Republicans basically say, "Okay, we'll agree with the President. We'll save the Social Security tax surplus for Social Security, and we'll use that to pay the debt down." And I want to give them that, and I appreciate the fact that they've agreed with me today; they've agreed to pay it down some. "But we want to give the whole rest of the surplus to a tax cut."

We say, even though we're in an election season already, that's a mistake, because if you look at the real, long-term challenges of America, you can't honestly say we can afford a tax cut that big. What are those challenges? Let me just mention a few. One is the aging of America. The number of people over 65 in this country will double in 30 years; I hope to be one of them.

Anybody in America who lives to be 65 today has a life expectancy of 82. A child born in America today has a life expectancy of nearly 77 years. Within 3 years, we will finish the decoding of the human gene, and young mothers who take their babies home from the hospital will have a roadmap that will tell them—you have a fine, healthy young boy, but his genetic makeup makes him highly likely to develop heart disease in his thirties or forties. Therefore, you should do these things. Your daughter is beautiful, but she has a gene which predisposes her to breast cancer at an early age. Therefore, you should do these things.

It is not inconceivable that within a decade, the average life expectancy of newborns will be over 80—and keep in mind, that takes accounts of all the accidents and the diseases and everything that can happen to people. It is at our peril, therefore, that we pass up the chance to stabilize Social Security and Medicare and to reform Medicare so that it fits the needs of modern medicine with a prescription drug benefit and getting much more of our seniors to take preventive tests for everything from osteoporosis to cancer, because we can avoid a lot of the expensive medical bills if we prevent things from happening in the first place.

So I think we ought to not only set aside a substantial amount of the surplus for Social Security but also for Medicare, and that we should take the interest reduction when we pay down the debt—that means less interest, right? I think we ought to take all the interest savings and put it into Social Security so we can run the life of the Social Security Trust Fund out for more than 50 years. Right now, Medicare is projected to go broke in 2015, Social Security in 2034. Under my plan, we could take Medicare out for more than 25 years; we could take Social Security out for more than 50 years.

The second thing we have to think about is how to keep the economy going. You know, I'm sure you've all noticed, particularly those of you in business, the last 2 months, there's

been this real debate about whether the Federal Reserve should raise interest rates to try to head off inflation that is not at all in evidence now, because nobody can imagine that we've had this economy growing this long in peacetime at this high rate.

Bill Daley and I kind of like it. It's our job. But people say, "Well, you know, you haven't"—they say, "You know, Clinton may have a good team, but they didn't repeal the laws of economics, so I mean, don't we have to raise interest rates, slow the economy down to stop inflation, because if we have inflation, then we'll have a huge increase in interest rates and the thing will crater." And you've been seeing all this debate.

So I ask myself all the time: What can we do to keep the economy going, to minimize the effect of the next slowdown, to ensure that the next pickup will be quicker? And I have two things that I think are quite important that are inconsistent with the Republican plan.

One is, I don't want to just pay down the debt. I want to pay it off. And under my plan, we'll be out of debt in 15 years for the first time since 1835. Now, why does that matter, and why would the more liberal of the two parties be for it? How does that help ordinary people? How does it help wealthy people? Why is it worth more to you than a tax cut? Why? Because in a global economy where money moves around in the flash of an eye all over the world, if we're out of debt, what does that mean?

It means interest rates will be lower for business; it means there will be more business investment; it means there will be more people hired for jobs; it means there will be more money available for wage increases and for ordinary middle class people or people struggling to work their way into the middle class; it means the interest rates they pay on homes, cars, credit cards, and college loans will be lower. It means the next time there are a lot of problems around the world like this financial crisis in Asia a couple of years ago, that our friends around the world will be able to get the money they need to get back on their feet at lower interest rates. It means—God forbid—if we have another terrible economic crisis in America sometime in the future and we have to go into debt, we'll be able to get lower interest rates, and then we'll be able to get out of debt again in a hurry because we won't be borrowing money

just to pay the bills every week, as we have been since 1835—and especially for the 12 years before I took office.

So this is a huge deal. The other big thing we can do to keep the economy growing without inflation is to bring economic opportunity to the people in the neighborhoods, the inner-city neighborhoods, the small towns, the rural areas, and the Indian reservations that haven't felt a lick of prosperity in spite of all we've enjoyed. And that's why I took that trip across America to Appalachia, to the Mississippi Delta, to the Indian reservation, and to the inner cities to highlight the fact that as well as we are doing, there are still places that haven't felt the sunlight of our prosperity.

And I have asked the Congress to pass a tax cut that is affordable, that includes giving people in this room who have money the same financial incentives through tax credits and Government loan guarantees to invest in an Indian reservation or in Appalachia or the Mississippi Delta or the inner city that we give you today to invest in the Caribbean, in Africa, in Latin America, or in Asia. I don't want to take away those incentives. I want to help those people, too. But I think we ought to have the same incentive to give poor people in America a chance to be part of the economic mainstream. And that's what I think we ought to do.

And let me just mention two other things. We have made great improvements in education. With tax cuts already provided, we've given tax credits to everybody, practically, for the first 2 years of college and, indeed, for the next 2, and for graduate school. But we still don't have the best school system in the world for everybody, and until we have world-class education for everybody, this country is going to be held back. And as we've grown more diverse and more and more of our kids have a first language not even English, we're going to have to work harder to have a good school system.

If the Republican plan passes, we will literally have to cut back on our present level of support for excellence in education at a time when we're trying to hook up all of the classrooms to the Internet, build modernized schools, raise standards, end social promotion, but give the schools money for summer school and after-school programs. We will have to have a huge cut in national support for education if this tax plan passes.

The last thing I'd just like to mention is the crime rate going down. I don't know if you remember this, but I had a huge fight with the Members of the other party in '94. When Tony and others joined together, we passed this crime bill. They said if we put 100,000 police on the streets, it wouldn't have any impact on the crime rate. Well, they were wrong.

Now, I've got a plan that would put 50,000 more police on the street and target them in the areas that have still real high crime. We actually have a chance to make this the safest big country in the world in the next 10 years. But if this tax cut passes, we'll have to make big cuts in what we're doing now in law enforcement and the support we have in State and local law enforcement and the work Federal law enforcement does.

So it seems to me—and I could give you lots of other examples—now, does that mean we can't have any tax cut? No, I actually presented quite a sizeable tax cut to the Congress. I said, but let's do first things first. Let's save Social Security and Medicare. Let's pay the debt off. Let's make sure we can do what we have to do in education, law enforcement, medical research, national defense, the environment. What we have to do—not big increases, but what we have to do—and then give the rest of it back to the taxpayers. That's the way I did it.

And there's a substantial tax—[inaudible]—worth hundreds of dollars a year to a lot of people for child care, for long-term care, to save for retirement. Now, one of my staff members said, "But you see what we're doing, don't you? We haven't saved Social Security. We haven't saved Medicare. We haven't secured these other things. What are we debating first? Their tax credit."

One of the guys that works for me says this is kind of like a family sitting down saying, you know, "Let's take the vacation of our dreams to Hawaii, and when we get back, we'll figure out whether we can pay the home mortgage and send our kids to college." [Laughter] I mean, that's what we're doing here. And so I say to you, I think we're right. But why are you here? I'm telling you, everybody in this room—just about everybody in this room—would be better off—you ought to be at their deal, because for the first year, you'd be better off with their deal, because I think two-thirds of the benefits of their plan go to the top 2

percent or something of the economy. You'd be a lot better off in the short run with their deal. Why are you here?

Most of us believe—I think all of us believe—that those of us who are fortunate do better in the long run when everybody else does better, that we not only have a moral obligation to make sure everybody has a chance, but we actually do better. And guess what, we now have evidence.

I've got a friend in New York who runs one of the biggest companies in this country. He's going around to Wall Street, now that all these Republican and Democratic Presidential candidates are raising money, and all these Wall Street guys are saying, "You know, you've got to go for the Republicans this time." And he says, "I'll tell you what you do: If you paid more in taxes after 1993 because of Bill Clinton's deficit reduction package than you've made in the stock market, be for the Republicans." [Laughter] "But if you haven't, you'd better think about it."

But this is not a selfish—it is actually true that we all do better when we help each other. And so if you think about it—I think the one thing that defines the difference between the two parties today is how we think of our national community. I think they honestly believe—I don't mean this in a critical way—I think they honestly believe that they see the national community as people who say they believe the same things. We say the national community is everybody who is a responsible citizen, working together, trying to help each other reach our full potential. And we believe the Government has a role to play when there is no other way to do it. They call us the party of Government; I've given you the smallest Federal Government since John Kennedy was President. I've privatized more programs and eliminated more than Presidents Reagan and Bush did.

The percentage of jobs created in the private sector in the Clinton administration is significantly higher than the percentage created in the two previous Republican administrations. We don't believe the Government can solve all the problems, but we believe in things like family leave. We believe that. We believe that's a good thing for America. We believe in the Patients' Bill of Rights.

We think if people are going to go into managed care, they ought to know they can see a specialist if the doctor says so. And if they

get hit in an accident coming out of the concert in Cincinnati tonight, they ought not to have to go past two hospitals to get to the emergency room just because the first two aren't covered. We believe that. That's what we really believe. And I'm willing to pay what the Republicans say it would cost, 2 bucks a month on my health insurance, so somebody else can see a specialist and go to the nearest emergency room, and I think most of you are. And I think we're all better off when people are healthier. They're more secure; they feel better at work; they feel better about their country. That's the difference.

I believe we'd all be better off if we could end 100 years of oppression of the Native Americans, and they could actually make a living on those Indian reservations instead of haggling over a deal made over 100 years ago that was a disgrace to the United States. We believe that we are bound up together. And I hope that if somebody asks you tomorrow why you came here, you'll be able to tell them that.

I'll close with just these thoughts. I'll tell you three stories real quick.

I was in Iowa a few days ago, and I remembered the first time I went to Iowa after I became President—I believe it's the first time—was when they had that 500-year flood in the Mississippi River. Do you remember that? And the Mississippi just flooded its banks in '93—500-year flood.

So I go to Des Moines and I'm going out there, stacking those sandbags, feeling good—you know, I'm being a good citizen, doing it and trying to set a good example. And I look up and there is this child standing there who was then 13 years old, who was about this tall, even though she's 13 years old. And the bones in her head were bulging through her skin, and her elbows and knees were knobby and her knuckles were bony, because she was born with brittle bone disease. She's had dozens of bone breaks, all kinds of operations. Every bone in her body could have been shattered. And she's there with the people and the sandbags.

And I asked this child, I said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Do you live in Des Moines?" She said, "No, sir, I'm from Wisconsin." She said, "But these people need help." And I don't know if you've known any children with brittle bone disease; some of them never get out of bed. This girl's really relatively strong, but still, she could—was in great danger, always.

And I said, "Aren't you afraid to be here?" She said, "I've got to go on living. These people need help. I asked my parents if I could come down here, and we came." That young woman went to the National Institutes of Health, twice a year, every year after that, so I kept in touch with her. Her name is Brianne Schwantes.

Last year I went out to American University in Washington to make a speech and I looked up, and there she was, an 18-year-old freshman, introducing me to all of her roommates. Now, I feel better that a child like that could get some of our tax money at the National Institutes of Health, and I think this country is better because of it.

I'll tell you another story. When I was in Iowa, I looked out, and on the second row of this speech I gave at this school—there were hundreds of people there—there is this radiant young African-American girl, about 8 years old now, tall, beautiful. Her name is Jimiya Poisel. The first time I met her, she was a little baby in her mother's arms in 1992 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. There was this huge rally there. And so I went to the crowd and I was shaking hands the way I always do, and there was this very tall white lady holding this African-American baby.

So I said, "Whose baby is that?" She said, "This is my baby." And I said, "Well, where did you get that baby?" She said, "From Miami." I said, "Well, why, how?" She said, "Well, you see, this baby was born with AIDS; so nobody wanted it, and I thought somebody ought to give this baby a home."

I later found out this woman—that her husband had left her; she had two children of her own; she was living in an apartment, barely able to make ends meet, but she had enough heart to take this little baby. And a couple of times a year, every year between now and then, they came to the NIH—this child with AIDS. She is a beautiful child. And once every year or so, they'd come by to see me and I'd keep up with her, and when I'd go to Iowa she'd always be there. She was there in the audience, faithfully, like she always is.

The lady had a better turn in her life; good things have happened to her and her family. I think we're better off that that little girl found a home, that she had a woman who had more problems than most of us have ever had in her life, but she still had enough room for her, and that her Government helped her raise this

child. And she got a \$500 tax credit because of the Balanced Budget Act. That the child will be able to go to college, and that, thank goodness, because of medical research, she'll probably live to go to college.

Last thing. When I went to the Indian reservation, I was introduced by the chief of the Oglala Sioux; they now call him the President. His name is Harold Salway. Before I went to Pine Ridge, Mr. Salway and 18 other tribal leaders from Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota, the high plains, came to see me at the White House. And we were sitting there, and they all went through all their concerns—you know, about education and the economy and everything. And then at the end, Salway stands up. And he's not a very tall man, but he's very dignified and he stood there like this, and he said, "I have something I would like to say." He said, "We are supporting your position in Kosovo." The poorest Americans. He said, "You see, we know something about ethnic cleansing." [Laughter] But he said—let me finish—he said, "But this is America." He said, "My great-grandfather was massacred at Wounded Knee. I had two uncles. One was on the beach at Normandy. The other was the first Native American fighter pilot in the history of the military in the United States. And here am I, their nephew, with the President of the United States." He said, "I have only one son, and he means more to me than anything. But I would be honored to have him wear the uniform of my country to fight against ethnic cleansing in Kosovo." Community. Humanity.

Thirty-one years ago Senator Kennedy gave another eulogy for his brother, Robert. Those of us who were grown then, many of us have a clear memory of it. And I want to close with this. I've thought about it a lot today. That man has borne a lot of burden. But after Robert Kennedy's campaign for President in 1968, where he'd gone into the coal mining areas of Appalachia, where he went to the Indian reservation, where he went to places and people that had been forgotten, Ted Kennedy said that he and his family hoped that what their brother was to them and what he wished for others would someday come to pass for all the world. I heard it 31 years ago; I have never forgotten it. That's why I'm here tonight, and why I hope you are.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:55 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to dinner hosts Stanley M. Chesley and Richard D. Lawrence; Joseph J. Andrew, national chair, Democratic National Committee; James Evans,

director, senior vice president, and general counsel, American Financial Group; David J. Leland, chair, Ohio State Democratic Party; and Jimiye Poisel's mother, Laura.

The President's Radio Address

July 24, 1999

Good morning. At this time of great progress and hope for our Nation, we have the chance of a lifetime to build an even stronger America in the 21st century by facing our great long-term challenges like saving Social Security and Medicare, paying off our national debt and bringing economic opportunity to people and places left behind in our recovery, giving all our children a world-class education—and the challenge I want to speak with you about today: fighting crime and making America the world's safest big nation.

For too many years it looked as if the crime rate would rise forever. In too many places, families barricaded themselves behind barred doors and windows; children were afraid to walk to school; and once thriving communities became proving grounds for lawless gangs.

I took office determined to change this. More than 6½ years ago, Vice President Gore and I put in place a tough, smart anticrime strategy of more police, better prevention, and tougher punishments; a strategy that took assault weapons off our streets and kept illegal guns out of the hands of criminals and away from our children; above all, an anticrime strategy that funded local solutions to local problems, spearheaded by Attorney General Janet Reno, herself a former prosecutor.

This strategy, pioneered in our communities, has been taken nationwide by our 1994 crime bill. It has worked beyond all expectations. The murder rate is down to its lowest level in 30 years; overall crime, its lowest level in 26 years; violent crime has dropped by 27 percent in the last 6 years alone. And in many smaller ways, reducing crimes like vandalism that undermine our quality of life, we're beginning to restore civility to our everyday lives. Community policing has been central to our success. This May I was proud to announce that since I signed

the crime bill in 1994, we've funded 100,000 community police officers to work with local citizens, identify problems, track criminals, and help bring people and life back to our streets.

Today I'm pleased to announce 65 new grants to help communities around the country hire more than 800 new police officers, including 200 community police officers right here in the District of Columbia. We'll also help the District hire 40 new community prosecutors to work closely with police and with residents on our streets, in our neighborhoods, to fight and prevent crime.

Every major law enforcement organization supports our community policing program. I propose to put 50,000 more officers in our neighborhoods, those that still have too much crime. But our ability to continue to do this—indeed, our ability to meet many of our vital national needs—will be put at risk by the tax and budget plan now being pressed by Republican leaders in Congress. This week the Republicans in the House of Representatives passed a reckless plan that would cost \$800 billion in the next 10 years and a staggering \$3 trillion over the next two decades. It is so large, and it balloons in size so dramatically in future years that it would make it impossible to invest our surplus to save Social Security, to save and strengthen Medicare with a prescription drug benefit, to pay off our national debt.

Beyond that, the GOP tax cut is so large it would require dramatic cuts in vital areas, such as education, the environment, biomedical research, defense, and crime fighting. The Republican budget already cuts our successful community policing proposal in half. Their reckless tax plan would threaten law enforcement across the board, forcing reductions in the number of Federal agents and cutting deeply into support for State and local law enforcement.